

**Village of Salado  
Salado Municipal Building  
301 North Stagecoach Road  
Salado, Texas  
Minutes of Regular Meeting of Board of Aldermen  
June 18, 2020 at 6:30 p.m.**

The Board of Aldermen meeting was called to order at 6:32 p.m. by Mayor Skip Blancett.

Mayor Blancett gave the Invocation and the Board of Aldermen led the Pledge of Allegiance to the United States and Texas flags.

Board Members Present: Mayor Skip Blancett, Mayor Pro-tem Michael Coggin, Aldermen Rodney Bell, Amber Preston Dankert, and John Cole. *(The meeting was conducted via videoconference.)*

Staff Present: Village Administrator Don Ferguson and City Secretary Cara McPartland

### **1. Citizens Communications**

No citizen comments were heard.

### **2. Consent Agenda**

- A. Approval of minutes of the Regular Board of Aldermen meeting of June 4, 2020.
- B. Approval of the May 2020 Financial Statements for the Village of Salado.

Mayor Pro-tem Coggin moved to approve the Consent Agenda, as presented. Alderman Dankert seconded. Alderman Cole requested that recently approved minutes be immediately placed on the Village website. Village Administrator Ferguson replied affirmatively to Alderman Cole's question as to whether two payments made for May's contract labor expenditure in the amount of \$2,376 were paid to the same entity. Motion carried on a vote of 4-0.

### **3. Village Administrator's Report**

- Wastewater Project Update

Village Administrator Ferguson reported the deadline for bid submittals is 3 p.m. on Tuesday, July 7, 2020 for the Royal Street lift station odor control system. He said the bid package is available on the Village's website and at the Village Engineer's office. There is a non-mandatory pre-bid conference scheduled for Tuesday, June 30<sup>th</sup> at 10 a.m. He advised a contractor is being scheduled to relocate a collection line at the intersection of Peddlers Alley and Royal Street. He stated work on the Village's discharge permit renewal is nearing completion, anticipated application submittal to TCEQ next week, and noted continued connection activity.

- Sales Tax Revenues

Village Administrator Ferguson reported that the June 2020 sales tax check, representing April sales, totaled \$46,565.26, was down about 7.6 percent from the same period last year, but noted that the decline was in part due to an audit adjustment in last year's June check. He anticipated that the April decline for businesses reporting quarterly will likely show up in the next couple of months. He advised that fiscal year-to-date collections total \$396,416, up less than one percent from the same period last year.

- Salado Creek Gravel Removal Project

Village Administrator Ferguson reported that a gravel permit application is being finalized for submittal to Texas Parks and Wildlife Department to remove the large build-up of gravel on the upstream side of the one-lane crossing at Salado Creek. He said cost estimates are being gathered for the project.

- Thomas Arnold Bridge Railing Project

Village Administrator Ferguson reported the lowest bid came in \$11,000 higher than the \$90,000 awarded to Keep Salado Beautiful. He advised that TxDOT has released the project, with the expectation that the State will pick up the \$11,000 difference, while the Village may be responsible for additional costs, should there be any change orders. He anticipated construction to start in about 50-60 days and take about 45 days to complete.

- Salado Salamander Critical Habitat Designation

Village Administrator Ferguson reported that the coalition has been very active and the consultant has advised that there will not be an opportunity to offer advance input on the habitat boundaries, which was covered under the first phase of the professional services agreement with the consulting firm. He advised the coalition discussed the path forward to affect the boundary designation, strategy to work with Williamson County, and how to address the first phase of the service agreement. He said that Judge Blackburn has set up a briefing with State legislators on coalition efforts, history of the salamander, and the habitat designation process.

- Main Street Improvement Project Update

Village Administrator Ferguson reported the contractor is on target to complete the project in early July. He said significant progress has been made on installation of sidewalks/driveways, manhole risers, and valve covers. He said light testing is anticipated for the end of June, a lighting ceremony is being planned for July, and a steering committee is planning a project completion celebration for August 2020.

- Coronavirus (COVID-19) Update

Village Administrator Ferguson reported on recent spikes in cases and advised there are 658 confirmed cases, mostly in Temple and Belton. He noted there have been no confirmed cases within the limits of the Village of Salado, but advised there have been some cases reported in the extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ). Despite "COVID fatigue," he said it is important to practice

social distancing, avoid crowds, and wear face coverings, when possible. He noted that 22,000 tests have been administered and 9 deaths have been reported in Bell County. He reported that the newly initiated Small Business Resource Center is open and currently offering virtual counseling, with in-person meetings available next month at the Salado Municipal Building. He noted that appointments may be made online on the Village's website. He advised that three phone inquiries have been made about the sales tax rebate program and one business has submitted an application for program funds. Acceptance of Pace Park Pavilion reservations will resume starting July 1, 2020 and opening of the playground and restrooms is expected at the end of this month. He spoke of growing concerns with overcrowding at Sirena Park and measures addressing capacity issues, water testing, and signage. He advised that Salado Municipal Court will conduct virtual hearings until further notice. He also reported on planned openings for public schools, business re-opening activity, and capacity limits.

Discussion established that there will be no July 4<sup>th</sup> fireworks display in Salado and that Fort Hood COVID-19 statistics are included in the State's Health Department reporting.

#### **4. Discussion and Possible Action**

- A. Discuss and consider possible action regarding a request to grant a one (1) hour extension of the time limit established for outdoor concerts at Johnny's Steaks and BBQ for a concert scheduled on Saturday, June 27, 2020. (*Village Administrator*)

Village Administrator Ferguson advised that the applicant has withdrawn this request, as the time extension is no longer needed due to re-scheduling of the event over two nights.

- B. Discuss and consider possible action appointing an individual to fill the vacancy created by the recent resignation of Mayor Pro-tem and Alderman Frank Coachman from the Village of Salado Board of Aldermen. (*Village Administrator*)

Village Administrator Ferguson presented the applicants' names for consideration and Mayor Blancett invited those applicants in attendance to speak on their qualifications.

Susan Bradshaw spoke of her past experience in other cities and described parallels with Salado's current situation, particularly with challenges such as growth, and efforts to improve communications and decision-making. Alderman Cole referenced Ms. Bradshaw's experience with homeowners associations and asked how she would bring the concerns of multiple Salado homeowners associations containing conflicting provisions to the Board of Aldermen. Ms. Bradshaw welcomed the challenge of addressing this matter and spoke of her past experience and success in bringing homeowners associations together into a collaborative group. In response to Mayor Blancett, Ms. Bradshaw replied her guidance to presumptive mayor and current Mayor Pro-tem Coggin would be to continue to seek public input, create dialogue, and outreach to residents, as he currently does. Mayor Pro-tem Coggin thanked Ms. Bradshaw for her comments.

Linda Lopez spoke of her strong family roots in Salado, strength in working with the people of the neighborhoods, her experience starting a neighborhood association in Phoenix, and working with the mayor and the police. She spoke of her background as a Salado business owner and believed

she has a connection with the people of Salado. She said there are a lot of people who do not feel their voices are being heard. She stated that whether that perception is correct or incorrect, that “perception is the reality.” She said that if people feel they are not being heard then they will turn to those who listen to them, but may not have accurate information. She said “there is a gap between the citizens of Salado and the Board to make Salado become what it needs to be.” In response to Mayor Pro-tem Coggin, Ms. Lopez replied that her vision of what Salado needs to be, based on her experiences as a business owner from 2001-2005, is that Salado has lost a lot of traffic and businesses, which she would like to see come back. She stated that “Salado is a fabulous village and it needs to be thought of and spoken about in that manner.”

Alderman Cole referred to the lack of citizen comments at tonight’s meeting and asked Ms. Lopez how to fix that lack of response. He also asked Ms. Lopez to elaborate on her application, specifically the comment regarding getting Salado back on track. Ms. Lopez replied that some people say they do not speak because they feel no one will listen and some citizens are not comfortable speaking and prefer to speak to someone they know, instead of going to the Board. She felt that Mayor Pro-tem Coggin and other Board members are doing a good job of trying to get back on track and cited Mayor Pro-tem Coggin’s use of social media to communicate with Village residents.

The remaining applicants, Judy Fields and Curt Strong, were not meeting participants at this time, therefore, they did not respond to requests for comments.

Mayor Pro-tem Coggin said applicants should be prepared to be “thick-skinned,” as there is always the possibility to have unhappy people. He spoke of the time and effort involved in serving on the Board and staying in communication with the public and businesses. Alderman Cole concurred Mayor Pro-tem Coggin’s comments. Mayor Blancett spoke of the importance of a democratic majority and holding the Board and community together. Consistent with his stated position at the Board’s last meeting, Alderman Bell thanked the applicants for their commitment to serve, but wanted each applicant to know that he will be voting against the idea of filling the position at all, whoever the nominee may be. He said that regardless of what happens tonight, he would look forward to working together with anyone filling the vacancy.

Alderman Cole moved to recommend appointment of Susan Bradshaw to fill the vacancy on the Board of Aldermen. Motion died for lack of a second.

Alderman Dankert moved to nominate Linda Lopez to fill the vacancy on the Board of Aldermen. Mayor Pro-tem Coggin seconded. Mayor Pro-tem Coggin was very impressed by the quality of the candidates, but felt that Linda Lopez would probably be the best qualified. Motion carried on a vote as follows: Mayor Pro-tem Coggin, aye; Alderman Dankert, aye; Alderman Cole, nay; and Alderman Bell, nay. Motion tied on a vote of 2-2. Mayor Blancett voted nay to break the tie vote. Motion failed on a vote of 2-3.

Mayor Pro-tem Coggin moved to not fill the vacant position at this time. Alderman Bell seconded.

Alderman Dankert said the tie vote on this item exemplifies the need to fill the position until November, as there will always be a 2-2 split vote, with the mayor casting the fifth and deciding

vote. She said both Linda and Susan are qualified individuals who would offer a unique opportunity to hear a “community” voice and expressed disappointment over not filling this position. Mayor Pro-tem Coggin supported bringing a new voice to the Board, but felt that trying to fill this position for approximately eight more meetings is a “lose-lose” situation for current Board members, and as with similar past circumstances, he said there will always be people who will say the Board did not do the right thing. He was pleased with the number and quality of applicants. Alderman Cole inquired about the possibility of a special election. Village Administrator Ferguson replied that if a special election were called, the timeframe to serve would be very short, due to the limited number of meetings left before expiration of the term. Aldermen Coggin and Dankert spoke in favor of the Board’s opportunity to fill the vacancy. Alderman Bell disagreed.

Mayor Blancett called for a vote on the motion to not fill the position, as follows: Mayor Pro-tem Coggin, nay; Alderman Bell, aye; Alderman Dankert, nay; and Alderman Cole, aye. Motion tied on a vote of 2-2. Mayor Blancett voted aye to break the tie vote. Motion carried on a vote of 3-2.

Following the vote, brief discussion recognized the difficult choices Board members face. Alderman Dankert stated that notwithstanding the mayor’s comments that his role is more to rally the troops than to have a voice, she said “you just gave yourself that vote.” Mayor Pro-tem Coggin expressed appreciation to all of the time and effort put in by the candidates and was impressed by their comments. He encouraged all of the candidates to think about running for Board positions in the future.

- C. Discuss and consider possible action approving a funding agreement between the Village of Salado and *The Salado Museum College Park, Inc.* relating to the expenditure of \$8,000 in Hotel Occupancy Tax revenues to help fund improvements to the balcony of the Salado Museum located at 423 S. Main Street. (*Village Administrator*)

Village Administrator Ferguson reviewed past Board direction to draft a funding agreement. Museum Director Dave Swarthout spoke on provision of documents required as part of the funding agreement. Alderman Cole asked about the timeframe for fundraising activities mentioned by Mr. Swarthout during the Board’s last meeting. Mr. Swarthout clarified that the Museum would not be caught up on all of its fund raising by November and said the subject improvements would be a legal expenditure of Hotel Occupancy Tax (HOT) revenue. He noted that the Museum has never asked for any HOT funding to date and any assistance is greatly needed and appreciated. In response to Mayor Pro-tem Coggin, Village Administrator Ferguson confirmed that this funding agreement is the necessary tool for ensuring the \$8,000 expenditure is correctly used for the balcony construction. Mayor Blancett read the following letter to the Board: “As a member of the current advisory board, I would like to express my concern over Item C of the agenda. It is my understanding that it is your intention to give \$8,000 of tourism money to the balcony restoration of the current Museum building. It is true that we do not currently have a tourism director, but I understand the city administrator is currently interviewing to fill the position of tourism director. Because the budget has still been designated and the year’s obligations should still be in place, it seems to me that the Tourism Advisory Board should have input for any changes of tourism monies, as long as there is a Tourism Advisory Board. The last tourism director went to great lengths to make sure there was an easy transition for a new director and that the expenditures could

continue on as planned until the new director and Advisory Board advised differently. Tourism is of the utmost importance to the Village and I recognize that the Museum is visited by both tourists and local people. The long range plans and needs for the hotel bed and breakfast money is underfunded at this time to meet predicted, more direct, marketing goals and costs. With this in mind, I respectfully ask that you consider other avenues for funding your gift to the Museum and keep the tourism money to promote tourism that requires overnight stays in local hotels and bed and breakfast facilities, which in turn generates more hotel tax revenue for the purpose. Thank you.”

Alderman Dankert asked who submitted the letter. Mayor Blancett replied it was anonymous. Aldermen Dankert and Bell said they did not recognize anonymous letters. Mayor Blancett entertained a motion. Village Administrator Ferguson stated that the letter is public record and was submitted by Gayle Blancett.

Alderman Bell moved to approve the funding agreement between the Village of Salado and *The Salado Museum College Park, Inc.*, as presented. Alderman Dankert seconded. Motion carried on a vote of 3-1. Alderman Cole voted against.

Brief discussion included timing of disbursement of funds to the Museum and the role and responsibilities of the Tourism Advisory Board, which is to work with the tourism director on the development, implementation, and monitoring of a strategy to promote overnight visitation in the community.

D. Discuss and consider possible action appointing two (2) members to the Salado Economic Development Advisory Board. (*Village Administrator*)

Village Administrator Ferguson advised that former Salado Mayor Merle Stalcup recently applied to serve on the Economic Development Advisory Board (EDAB). He stated that the Chamber of Commerce initially expressed interest in having a representative on the EDAB, but since holding internal discussions, the Chamber indicated it would like to assign one of its members to be a liaison on EDAB, rather than a voting member.

In response to Alderman Bell’s question regarding the chair position vacated by former Alderman Frank Coachman, Village Administrator Ferguson replied that the EDAB will be electing officers at its meeting next week. Alderman Dankert asked if the chair position was meant to be filled by a current Board of Alderman member and whether such language needs to be changed. Village Administrator Ferguson responded that the Board can decide whether or not it wants to have a representative from the Board of Alderman serve as the EDAB chair. He noted that the EDAB can for the time being appoint a vice/interim chair to lead meetings.

Alderman Cole moved to approve the appointment of Merle Stalcup to the EDAB. Alderman Bell seconded. Motion carried on a vote of 4-0.

Village Administrator Ferguson stated that the EDAB can elect officers next week, but an item can be added to the Board’s July 2<sup>nd</sup> agenda to discuss Board involvement on the EDAB, including

whether the Board desires to have a representative serve on EDAB. Alderman Coggin also asked for a future agenda item to discuss the role of the Tourism Advisory Board.

- E. Discuss and consider possible action regarding a proposed interlocal agreement between the City of Belton, Texas and the Village of Salado, Texas delegating plat approval authority for a tract of land located in the extraterritorial jurisdiction of both municipalities. (*Village Administrator*)

Village Administrator Ferguson recommended approval of the proposed interlocal agreement, as requested by the property owner and without objection from the City of Belton. He noted that as the larger municipality, the City of Belton has the authority for plat approval or may choose to delegate such approval to the smaller municipality.

Mayor Pro-tem Coggin moved to approve the interlocal agreement between the City of Belton and the Village of Salado delegating plat approval authority for the subject tract of land. Alderman Dankert seconded. Motion carried on a vote 4-0.

## 5. Workshop

- A. Discuss and consider possible issues relating to a request for the Village of Salado to provide property and liability insurance coverage for the Salado Historic Cabins which belong to the Salado Historical Society. (*Village Administrator; this is not an action item*)

Village Administrator Ferguson advised the Historical Society received an insurance quote of around \$900 per year and is asking the Village to add the cabins to the Village's insurance policy, as the Society indicated it would be difficult to pay for coverage. He said initially the Historical Society discussed the possibility of Salado ISD adding the cabins to its policy, as they are located on Salado ISD property. However, the Salado ISD's insurance carrier advised that such additional coverage would not be possible. He noted that the Village's insurance carrier has the ability to extend coverage to public parks. He said the Village has an existing agreement to provide liability and property insurance for the Salado Sculpture Garden, which has been declared a public park. He advised the Village's insurance carrier would need to assess the cabins before determining cost of coverage.

Discussion addressed the location of the cabins (on Salado ISD-owned property); ownership of the cabins (owned by Salado Historical Society); liability only versus liability/property insurance; need to declare the cabins as a publicly-accessible park in order to provide coverage; communications with Salado ISD Superintendent Michael Novotny regarding addition of cabins to the Salado ISD's insurance policy, which would extend only to governmental entities; possible cost-sharing options among parties; Salado Historical Society funding sources; possible drafting of a 3-party interlocal agreement among the Village of Salado, Salado ISD, and the Salado Historical Society; and need for feedback from the Salado Historical Society on declaring the cabins as a public park.

Village Administrator Ferguson advised that staff will contact the Salado Historical Society regarding the issue of public park designation, draft a 3-party agreement for future Board consideration, and obtain cost estimates for the insurance coverage.

- B. Discuss and consider possible issues relating to permanently moving the Village of Salado's General Election from May to November. (*Mayor Pro-tem Michael Coggin; this is not an action item*)

Mayor Pro-tem Coggin requested to pull this item from the agenda for the foreseeable future.

- C. Discuss and consider possible issues relating to renaming Williams Road. (*Village Administrator; this is not an action item*)

Village Administrator Ferguson spoke on Salado ISD's interest in renaming Williams Road such that the name of the roadway is more closely tied to the school. He reviewed street naming standards in place to ensure there is not duplication in the naming process. He envisioned issuing a public call for possible street names and bringing suggested street names forward after checking with 9-1-1 addressing to determine if any conflicts exist.

Discussion addressed possible costs to the Village (limited to cost of signage); history of existing name ("Williams Road"); list of possible names; importance of public input on street names, including any possible objections to removing "Williams" from the street name; and consideration of a street-naming contest.

Village Administrator Ferguson advised he will contact the Salado ISD regarding submittal of street name(s) for future consideration by the Board of Aldermen.

- D. Discuss and consider issues relating to the fiscal impact of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic on the Village of Salado. (*Village Administrator; this is not an action item*)

Village Administrator Ferguson spoke of continued tightening and monitoring of expenditures; beginning of flow of room tax funds back into the Hotel Occupancy Tax (HOT) fund as lodging facilities are starting to re-open; re-initiation of the search for a new tourism director in July; current vacant police officer position (no new positions are being added); and moving forward with capital expenditure plans per previous Board direction.

Discussion addressed social distancing signage; direction to officers to periodically encourage social distancing at the park; monitoring and closing of park, if needed, to address capacity issues; federal COVID-related assistance to smaller cities; capacity and distancing issues at Sirena Park; recommendations versus mandates regarding social distancing and face coverings; enforcement of capacity limits at bars/restaurants; and TABC's compliance efforts.

- E. Discuss and consider issues relating to requesting property tax relief from the State of Texas and local government entities. (*Mayor Pro-tem Michael Coggin; this is not an action item*)



Mayor Pro-tem Coggin asked how the Village can press state and county officials to consider a property tax freeze. Village Administrator Ferguson advised Bell County is wrestling with taxation issues during its budget process, but did not feel there is much movement on this issue. Mayor Pro-tem Coggin said with taxes and property values going up at a time when everybody's investments are going down causes great anxiety for citizens. He asked if writing a letter to Bell County Commissioners Court Judge Blackburn or Governor Abbott would do any good. Village Administrator Ferguson replied it is important for them to hear the Village's input and comments on the record, whether or not action is subsequently taken. Mayor Pro-tem Coggin requested that such a letter be signed by the mayor and sent to officials and the Salado Village Voice. He clarified for Village Administrator Ferguson that the letter should request freezing the tax rate as it is today. Discussion continued on effect of increasing property values on taxpayers; effective tax rate; providing copies of letter to surrounding cities; property tax relief for both residential and commercial property owners; and list of possible recipients of letter including state and county officials. Village Administrator Ferguson stated that an item to take action on sending the letter, as discussed, can be placed on the Board's next agenda.

Before adjournment, Alderman Cole received clarification from Village Administrator Ferguson that Salado ISD will be open on August 24, 2020. In reference to Alderman Cole's earlier inquiry about posting of minutes on the Village's website, Village Administrator Ferguson advised that the minutes from the May 21<sup>st</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> meetings that were approved at the Board's June 4<sup>th</sup> meeting have been posted on the Village's website with the notation that they are awaiting signatures by Mayor Blancett.

### Adjournment

Alderman Cole moved to adjourn. Mayor Pro-tem Coggin seconded. Mayor Blancett called the meeting adjourned at 8:32 p.m.

Recorded by:

Cara McPartland

These minutes approved on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of July, 2020.

APPROVED:

*Skip Blancett*  
Skip Blancett, Mayor

ATTEST:

*Cara McPartland*  
Cara McPartland, City Secretary

